FACT SHEET

EPA Region 7

Bonne Terre Mine Tailings Site
Bonne Terre, Missouri September 1998

SITE UPDATE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 is releasing additional information to supplement the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for the Bonne Terre Mine Tailings Site in Bonne Terre, Missouri. The new information focuses on the handling of the wastes associated with the chat pile west of Highway 67. EPA is making the EE/CA and this supplemental information available for additional public review and comment from September 28, 1998, through October 27, 1998. EPA will not select the clean-up actions until all public comments have been reviewed.

CLEAN-UP ACTIONS

The EE/CA, released in July 1998, provides analysis of clean-up options for the chat pile, an area of intermediate tailings near Highway 67, and the mine tailings area east of Highway 67. Based on public comments, EPA decided that two new alternatives for handling the chat pile need to be considered. These new alternatives include: a "minimum change" alternative which would mimic the existing visual appearance of the pile while providing for a clean and stable cover material; and a "complete removal" alternative which would remove all material from the chat pile and move it to the tailing area east of Highway 67. Other alternatives described in the EE/CA are variations of the same idea – lowering the pile height and providing flat developable land on top of the regraded pile. Some key features of the alternatives are described below.

"Minimum Change Alternative"

The goals of this alternative are to mimic the appearance of the existing pile as closely as possible while correcting conditions that contribute to erosion and long-term instability. The height of the chat pile and its summit would be virtually unchanged. The slopes of the pile would be shaped to the steepest grade possible, yet stable. Excess material from the reshaping of the pile would be moved to the tailings area just north of the pile and graded to a uniform slope. The surface of the chat pile would be covered with rock to match the existing pile's appearance. The base of the chat pile would be fenced or provided with other means to prevent access and damage to the rock slope protection. This alternative would cost approximately $1.5 million.

The primary advantage of this alternative is that it is the least expensive way to effectively take care of the environmental problem. The primary drawback is that the 32 acres of land on which the chat pile sits will never be available for economic development. An additional consideration is that the fenced-off pile will permanently remain at a high-visibility intersection.

"Complete Removal Alternative"

This alternative represents the extreme opposite of the above alternative. All material from the chat pile and the tailings area north of the pile would be moved to the tailings area east of Highway 67. About 2.8 million cubic yards of material would have to be transported across Highway 67, involving 140,000 round trips of trucks over about a three and one-half years. The result would be a natural slope from the Hazel Run Road down to Turkey Creek. This alternative would cost about $10.4 million.

One advantage of this alternative is that it eliminates the environmental problems caused by the tailings pile. Another benefit of this alternative is that it leaves no contamination behind, allowing the property to be easily developed. The two major drawbacks are the extremely high cost, particularly in comparison to the "minimum change" alternative, and the traffic, noise, and dust that would result from moving 140,000 truckloads of material across the highway.

"Other Alternatives for the Chat Pile"

These other alternatives were described in the EE/CA and all involve significant regrading of the pile and leaving a plateau at the top of the pile that could provide a potential development location. Some alternatives involved moving the material across the highway or to other locations. The alternatives considered reducing the pile height from 65 feet to 78 feet. The alternatives also considered both vegetative and rock cover for the finished pile. These alternatives range in cost from $3.4 million to $5.3 million.

BACKGROUND

The Bonne Terre Mine Tailings Site is located in an area known as the Old Lead Belt. Ownership of the site is mostly private, and portions are developed commercially under numerous owners. It is surrounded on the west and south by developed portions of the city of Bonne Terre, both residential and commercial. The EPA has determined that a removal action is required for this area because the lead in the piles presents a threat of exposure to people in the area. There is a potential for the lead-contaminated particles to be transferred offsite by wind and storm water runoff. Also, the tailings at or near the surface may migrate to surface water.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The EE/CA and the supplemental information for the Bonne Terre Mine Tailings Site are available for review at Mineral Area College, Park Hills, Missouri, during normal business hours. The EE/CA is also available for review at the Bonne Terre City Hall, 1A Northwood Drive, Bonne Terre, Missouri.

A 30-day public comment period on the EE/CA and the supplemental information will begin on September 28, 1998, and end October 27, 1998. EPA will be holding a public meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 7, 1998. The meeting will be held at Heritage Hall, 118 East School Street in Bonne Terre. Anyone wishing to comment on these documents may do so by submitting written comments or by making verbal comments at the October 7 meeting. Written comments may also be sent by mail, postmarked no later than October 27, 1998, to:

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions about this fact sheet, or need additional information regarding this site please call Dana Blubaugh, Community Involvement Coordinator, at (913) 551-7003 or toll- free at 1-800-223-0425.